

## Letter of Testimony

Date: May 18, 2011

To: House Education Committee

From: Dan Moore – St. Clair, MI – dmoore17@yahoo.com

Re: Teaching Tenure System – Michigan K-12 Public Schools

I am writing you today to express my concern for the current tenure system in our K-12 public schools. I am a veteran teacher of 13 years teaching at the middle school level. As our district has lost enrollment and funding, it is very clear to me that tenure-based staffing is not an effective practice. Our district's staffing progress is solely based upon tenure and as a result there is massive employee movement within schools, subject areas, grade levels and buildings. In the past six years, I have taught six different subject areas, had six different classrooms at three different schools. This, unfortunately, is not an isolated incident as there are many teachers that have had the same movement as I have.

In addition to the tenure-based system providing an unstable teaching staff, it also diminishes a teacher's effectiveness to thoroughly deliver instruction and provide creative treatments to the curriculum. In my opinion, it truly takes three to four years to master a curriculum. Who truly is affected the most are the students who are on the receiving end of an outdated staffing practice.

To illustrate personally how the tenure system has affected my students, last year I was staffed to a first grade position, a position I would never take. I displaced a young teacher whom I'm told was outstanding in the classroom. I was able to swap a position with another teacher for the 1st grade position and return to the middle school. I found out the very first day of school that I would be teaching 6th grade. The person that I bumped from that position was also very good. In addition to not being prepared, I was in fact a lousy sixth grade teacher. I replaced a person who was much better at this position due to the simple fact that I have more years in the system and more gray hair.

Five years ago, I was bumped (displaced) by another teacher. I was teaching computer technology at the time. I have a master's degree in technology, taught the subject for over 8 years, have written curriculum and consider myself one of

the best middle school computer instructors in the state. I worked extremely hard at my position and most importantly my students learned and enjoyed the class. The person who displaced me had one computer class, no experience, and I was asked by the administration to help train her for the position. Her reasoning for taking the position in the school location was to be closer to home.

There are school systems that staff well and forecast employee needs accordingly. I understand the union's position that tenure provides security and equality. The teacher's union also raises the point that districts would simply push out veteran teachers as a cost saving measure with teachers of less service years. Perhaps a few schools would, but what is the alternative? Is the current system working well?

The tenure system in Michigan needs to be improved and schools must focus on putting teachers that are well prepared and can perform in front of students. Teachers are not given an option to compete for positions. We are simply placed without thought, discussion or consideration to our effectiveness within the classroom. How are school administrators supposed to move a school forward without the ability to have staff they have selected? Without competition how are we getting the best teachers in front of students?

There are solutions to improving the tenure-based systems. We need to be competitive, apply common sense and be creative. We are losing young energetic educators that bring new ideas and push our students to think in new ways. The First In, Last Out model does not work for students who are going to be competing for jobs in a global market.

Thank you for your service to Michigan and your dedication to education. Please contact me at any time if you have any questions or would like to discuss solutions.

Sincerely,

Dan Moore  
7th/8th Grade  
Port Huron Schools  
Dmoore17@yahoo.com